

Series II
Subjects Files,
1916-1973

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CDE H.E. Eccles
account of Battle of
the Java Sea,
1942

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COMMANDER H. E. ECCLES ON "THE JAVA SEA BATTLE", Dictated
August 30th, 1942 in Naval Records & Library, Arlington Annex

On November 25, 1941, a major portion of the destroyers and the cruisers left Manila Bay for points south. The 57th Division, consisting of the WHIPPLE, EDWARDS, ALDEN and the EDSALL, together with the BLACK HAWK, were in Balikpapan, Borneo up to Sunday, December 7th. Saturday night we got word to get out of Balikpapan the following night and, in accordance with that order, Sunday afternoon we fueled to capacity and left Balikpapan about 9:30. Allowing for the difference in time between Balikpapan and Pearl Harbor we actually left Balikpapan about 5 or 6 hours before Pearl Harbor was attacked.

At that time all of us felt that war was a matter of hours or days. So it was no great surprise to us at about 3:00 o'clock in the morning to get the signal "Japan has commenced hostilities, govern yourselves accordingly."

The 57th Division left the BLACK HAWK and proceeded at high speed to Singapore, where we were supposed to act as anti-submarine screen for the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE. We had a rather uneventful trip to Singapore, stopping several times to warn merchantmen or to investigate merchantmen. One of the interesting aspects of the trip was the fact that every mast that came over the horizon looked like an enemy mast.

We had no idea what the disposition of the Japanese fleet was and the nerves of the men were on edge in an anticipatory sense.

We got to Singapore on Wednesday morning and secured alongside a fuel ship off the Naval dock yard in the neighborhood of 10:30 or 11:00 o'clock. We went ashore at once for a conference on the WHIPPLE, which was with the ALDEN alongside the docks fueling, and very shortly thereafter we got word that we were to get underway as soon as we had fueled and proceed up the coast of Malaya to assist in the return of the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE, which had been bombed and, according to reports, seriously damaged.

Captain Creighton, our Naval Observer, stated that the British were sending everything they possibly could up there to help the ships back and we were ordered to be ready for submarine attack and air attack at dawn. We were promised reconnaissance and fighter protection.

We got underway about 3:00 o'clock. We were delayed in getting underway because the low pressure on the pumps at Singapore would not permit fueling the ALDEN at any reasonable rate of speed and she got underway with about 60,000 gallons of fuel aboard.

We had twenty minutes to strip ship as we went through the mine field and the men "turned to" with a will in getting rid of extraneous gear. I managed to save the loudspeaker of our movie machine just as it was being thrown over the side, because I felt that the use of phonograph records would do much to help the men pass the time later on in the war. We made a good many mistakes in stripping the ship so

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hurriedly, although we had made many preparations for it beforehand. We dumped all our gasoline. We got rid of most of our paint.

On the way up shortly after dusk we sighted several British destroyers returning at high speed. It turned out later that they had all the survivors of the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE aboard. In one case, the JUPITER, I believe, had picked up 900 men. It was unfortunate, from certain aspects, that we did not know they had the survivors aboard. However, we merely exchanged calls and proceeded up the coast.

The last time we sighted a destroyer we reversed course to continue communications by flashing light and it was dark when we were through with the signals. We again reversed course and the last ship in the column, the EDSALL, missed the turn or fell back and shortly after we made our turn, we sighted the EDSALL. It was a rather tense moment because we had thought the EDSALL was immediately astern of us, instead of that she was on opposite course about 1,600 yards on our starboard beam, and for a moment looked like an enemy ship. However, the voice radio straightened the matter out and we continued.

In the meantime, we had gotten word that the REPULSE and the PRINCE OF WALES were sunk, and we were to continue our search for survivors. At about midnight we knew we were on the scene because we could smell fuel oil. Shortly thereafter, we ran into great quantities of fuel oil on the surface and began to see a good deal of wreckage.

Before leaving Singapore, we had had a British liaison officer, a young Lieutenant-Commander Godwin, R.N., and a group of signalmen and radiomen put aboard, together with flags and books, and most of the time we spent on the trip north was talking with them and ironing out our communication systems. It appeared that there would be very little difficulty in communicating, because all the British officers and men on liaison duty seemed to be very capable.

It was a moonlight misty night, flat calm, and the wreckage, burnt boats, life jackets, life rafts, things of that sort, gave us our first introduction to war.

At about one hour after we reached the scene, we got word that our fighter protection had been cancelled and that we were to clear the area before daylight. A rather interesting commentary on the lack of coordination that, in the first place, the British did not tell us that all the survivors had been rescued and that our trip north would be useless; in the second place, that our fighter protection was cancelled at about 6:00 or 7:00 o'clock in the evening - Captain Creighton heard it by accident about 11:00 o'clock and it took him about one hour to get the word off to us, but we had no fighter protection the next morning; the people who cancelled the fighter protection apparently made no effort to inform the ships who were supposed to get fighter protection.

We formed up and headed south at high speed. Shortly after daylight, a torpedo was fired at us from the starboard hand. When the torpedo was sighted, I was on the port side of the bridge asleep. I immediately went to the starboard side and saw the wake astern and a moment later saw another torpedo approaching on what appeared to be a collision course. We turned hard left and the torpedo missed, either close ahead or underneath the bow, possibly having been set for a cruiser target. The incident highlighted certain aspects of the situation. In the first place, all of us were very tired, having been going continuously since Sunday night and the lessons we learned then stood us in good stead, for thereafter, the Executive and I made sure to get as much sleep as possible, alternating with each other on the bridge during the day and night, excepting certain hours when we stayed up on the bridge together, but it showed the futility of expecting people to keep the proper mental alertness and quick reaction without sleep.

One of the very interesting aspects of our trip back was that about two hours after the submarine attack we sighted a string of sampans being towed by a small tug; the sampans were headed for Singapore and were flying the Japanese flag. I did not open fire on them with our machine guns as we pulled along side because I did not understand what was going on. The ships were filled with Japanese; the Japanese flag was flying. The Division Commander finally ordered the EDSALL to drop off and investigate. It turned out later that the British had been collecting the Japanese from outlying areas. They did not have enough transportation themselves so, in the circumstances, they merely ordered the Japanese to pack up and make their own way to Singapore. But it was a great shock to see the Japanese flag flying from the group of sampans filled with men, women and children. The EDSALL brought them in and turned them over to a patrol boat. I would say it was possibly the first capture of enemy personnel at sea by the American Navy.

When we arrived at Singapore, we found the place in a state of great dejection. The British were stupefied at the terrific loss they had received and some of the most fantastic and wild stories were going around as to the type of attack they had suffered.

One rumor that spread, which is an instance of the wildness of people's imagination, was that the Japanese planes had attacked in a wave of 1,000 planes, dropped their bombs first on one of the ships, then on the other and in each case the ships had simply disintegrated. When we turned to checking up with the survivors, we found that the best estimate as to the number of torpedo planes attacking gave us in the neighborhood of fifty to sixty. The low estimate, I heard one man say he counted 47 and another man made an estimate as high as 65. These had been preceded by a bombing attack which had hit one of the ships, but not seriously damaged it.

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The sinking of the PRINCE OF WALES and REPULSE is one of the few instances I know of where the Japanese made no attempt to interfere with the rescue of survivors. They did not bomb the destroyers conducting the rescue work, nor did they machine gun the survivors in the water.

The British destroyer which went alongside the PRINCE OF WALES took off some 67 wounded men over a gangway, and took off a great many others, filling up to about 900.

As the PRINCE OF WALES turned over before sinking, her bilge keel locked with the bilge keel on the destroyer and for a moment it was thought that the destroyer would be turned over. However, the destroyer's bilge keel ripped away, and the PRINCE OF WALES went on down without further damage to the destroyer.

One of the most discouraging things that we noticed when we went into Singapore was the age and obsolete character of many of the naval planes which were at the seaplane base. There were a great many Brewster Buffaloes in the air. We did not see any Spitfires or Hurricanes, nor many British bombing planes at Singapore.

The news was most discouraging. The Japanese had apparently been able to consolidate their landings without much trouble.

We spent the next few days perfecting our liaison with the British. We expected to work on convoys with them, bringing reinforcements into Singapore. However, on Sunday morning we got orders to sail immediately for Soerabaja to rejoin our own forces, and about noon we shoved off and headed at high speed for Soerabaja.

Previous to reaching Balikpapan, I had struck a log in the Makassar Straits and damaged one propeller. Therefore, on reaching Soerabaja, I went alongside the BLACK HAWK immediately, and for the next 48 hours we changed propellers.

One interesting aspect of that was while the ship was listed over, the log room was flooded with fuel oil from a leaky man hole plate and most of the routine records of the ship were ruined. That did save us a lot of paper work.

Soerabaja was in a state of uncertainty; there was no really coordinated system set up. It was doubtful if the tenders would stay there.

During the next week or ten days, a great many of the ships drifting in from various parts of the N.E.I. (Netherlands' East Indies) came in. PatWingTen came in and set up headquarters, but no smooth working organization was made up.

No attacks were made on Soerabaja at that time and things were hot and quiet.

Christmas day the EDWARDS left to act as guard for the TRINITY, which was anchored in a hideout in Warworada Bay. We made a fast trip down and relieved the PAUL JONES and BARKER who were with the TRINITY, and for the next month we acted as nursemaid to the TRINITY, keeping steam at the throttles at all times ready to leave our anchorage on five minutes notice. We saw Australian patrol planes from time to time, but saw no evidence of enemy activity. After about ten days in Warworada Bay we went to Keepang with the TRINITY, picking up the BLACK HAWK on the way, with other escorting vessels.

It was a sad commentary on our auxiliary service that our maximum speed in formation was about nine knots. Of course, the Navy had been howling for fast auxiliary ships for years and one of the great handicaps we had in the campaign was the fact that practically all of our auxiliary ships were very slow.

Our stay in Keepang was uneventful. We had one or two submarine scares, but nothing came up. We spent most of our time there on anti-submarine work. There were about 1,400 Australian troops and ground forces at the newly built airfield back of Keepang, which was very poorly defended. The men were short of food and stores and it didn't look as if they would be able to make any determined defense of that place.

About the middle of January we went up to Kebela Bay. There we were joined by the HOUSTON and BOISE. Admiral Glassford in the BOISE was in command of the Force and we made plans for an attack in the Molukka Straits where the Japanese were coming down. Just as we were leaving the ship to get under way, a signal came through with the fact that the Japanese had withdrawn, so the attack plan was thrown into the discard. The HOUSTON, WHIPPLE and EDWARDS were sent down to Torres Strait to pick up a convoy and the remaining ships rendezvoused in the Java Sea to await developments.

We had no charts of the area to which we were going and upon arrival in Torres Strait we got a tracing of Torres Strait from a HOUSTON chart; which was our only means of navigation in that area.

On our way back to Soerabaja we stopped off near Darwin to pick up the HAWAIIAN PLANTER and PECOS. We had picked up the PRESIDENT POLK at Torres Strait. We had an uneventful trip to Soerabaja.

While we were making the trip, the 59th Division made its famous attack on the Japanese in Makassar Strait. When we reached Soerabaja we were able to talk things over with the officers who had taken part in that battle. I believe that was the first surface engagement for any group of American ships, larger than submarine chasers, since the Spanish War.

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Much of the fuel oil we were receiving at that time had water in it and we had considerable difficulty with losing suction. In addition to that we had had to compensate due to lack of fuel on our trip from Singapore to Soerabaja and some water remained in our fuel system. This was a source of concern to us. However, we got the fuel system cleared out.

When we reached Soerabaja the EDWARDS was made part of the striking force and joined up with the STEWART, BARKER and BULMER under the command of Commander Thomas Binford.

We went out with the MARBLEHEAD and started to make an attack at Balikpapan. In the meantime, the BOISE had been damaged by grounding in Sape Strait and was returning to the United States, leaving us only two cruisers. The night for the attack on Balikpapan there was a brilliant full moon and a perfectly calm sea. We believe that we were under air observation the entire trip up.

The initial reconnaissance showed that we would be outnumbered about two to one, but when we got about 100 miles from Balikpapan, about 7:00 o'clock in the evening, the late afternoon reconnaissance reports came in which showed that the Japanese were obviously expecting us and had a very much larger force, consisting of four or five cruisers, ten destroyers and two mine layers, which were in a disposition which made it obvious that we could not reach the transports without fighting our way through this entire Japanese concentration. About a half an hour after receipt of this report Captain Robinson very wisely reversed course and we returned to a point south of the Kangean Islands.

The next day we joined up with the HOUSTON and other vessels, Dutch and American at Gili Raja, Madeira Strait, and there fueled and formed the Combined Striking Force under the command of Rear Admiral Doorman of the Netherlands Navy.

The following morning, while we were attending a conference on the DE RUYTER, the Japanese bombers, returning from an initial attack on Soerabaja, sighted our concentration. We got underway that night and the following day, February 4th, we were steaming in a large square south of the Kangean Islands waiting for the Japanese forces from Balikpapan to commit themselves to an attack either on Bandjermasin area or Makassar, the plan being to wait until they had committed themselves and then strike them. Our force consisted of the DE RUYTER, TROMP, four Dutch destroyers, HOUSTON, MARBLEHEAD, STEWART, EDWARDS, BULMER and BARKER.

At about 10:30 in the morning the Japanese bombers attacked us. They came over in waves of nine, there being three waves in each attack. They worked us over until about 1:30 or 2:00 o'clock. The first attack came in rather low and we all expected that the HOUSTON'S AA guns would knock down many of the first wave which came in in excellent formation, well closed up. However, the HOUSTON'S anti-aircraft fire was very erratic and no planes were knocked down.

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It is hard to remember the exact details of when what happened, but the MARBLEHEAD was hit first. The first hit, I believe, was the bomb which landed on her steering engine room, that jammed her rudder and did extensive damage. The next bomb that hit the MARBLEHEAD landed just abaft the bridge and burst, destroying the wardroom, sick bay and much of the officers' country. The third hit on the MARBLEHEAD was a near miss forward which opened up the fuel oil tanks and flooded her badly. At the conclusion of the attack the MARBLEHEAD, which normally drew about 16' forward, was drawing 28' forward and steaming at high speed in circles.

The HOUSTON was hit once and her No.3 turret was wiped out and the ship was saved only by one of the men, before dying, flooding the magazines. The HOUSTON left the formation and disappeared at high speed with a very bad fire. The TROMP and DE RUYTER were objects of the attack after the HOUSTON and MARBLEHEAD were hit. The MARBLEHEAD knocked down one plane which dove into the sea out of control after attempting to land on the MARBLEHEAD. I would judge that she hit the water about 500 yards forward of the MARBLEHEAD.

After the last attack we tried to keep some sort of formation and retired toward Soerabaja, heading for the entrance to Madoera Strait. It was quite obvious that the damaged ships could not get through the eastern entrance to Soerabaja because that is where it is shallow, but we steamed on this course for several hours and finally we got word for us to escort the MARBLEHEAD south of Java. We reversed course and headed for Lombok Strait. The MARBLEHEAD was listed badly, but was maintaining about 20 to 21 knots. It was quite obvious that she had been very badly damaged.

The entrance to Lombok Strait is five to seven miles wide, but there is a very strong current, sometimes running as high as seven knots in that vicinity. The MARBLEHEAD'S first pass at the strait, steering with her engines, was inaccurate and she made a big circle before entering. The American destroyers were acting as submarine screen.

It was calm through the strait, but where the swift current met the swells of the Indian Ocean in the southern part of the strait a very bad chop was thrown up and the waves were large. By that time it had gotten very dark and squally and it was a distinct problem to keep in touch with the MARBLEHEAD as she was steering wholly with her engines in long and erratic tacks. When the Indian Ocean rollers first got us I did not think it would be possible for the MARBLEHEAD to get through the strait without sinking. However, she did get through and it was with great relief that when we got into the long easy swells south of the Strait we were able to pick up the MARBLEHEAD astern of us. I feel that the feat of Captain Robinson, his officers and men, in bringing the MARBLEHEAD through the Strait and to Tjilatjap and finally to the United States is absolutely outstanding and it is impossible to give those officers and men too much credit for that accomplishment.

Tjilatjap was a rat trap. It had a long twisting entrance, very narrow, there was no turning room inside the harbor worth mentioning. Many ships were moored in there to buoys and all of us ran aground several times in a mud bank, trying to turn the ships around to make the very small dock near the entrance to the harbor where we lay to provision. The PECOS came in and we fueled from her. The current was strong in the harbor. It was squally and it was a very tiring day superimposed on the strain of the previous days. However, we got word that they were expecting a Japanese air attack the next morning.

As soon as it got to be light, we got the last of our "walkie-talkie" beef aboard, still warm, and shoved off, heading south after we cleared the channel and mine field.

Our orders were very indefinite, there was poor liaison in Tjilatjap, only one Navy officer being ashore there and being completely overloaded; communications were bad. We had no idea what to expect, but by telephone had been given three rendezvous. We knew the HOUSTON was all right because she was also in Tjilatjap.

For the next few days we steamed by south of Java. Once we ran up at high speed to Prigge Bay and spent the night fueling from a small Dutch tanker there and finally rendezvoused again with Admiral Doorman's force.

One of the great difficulties which we had was the fact that we had no really good means of communication with the Dutch.

They steamed at high speed during the night, changing course without signal, and our fuel was burned up rapidly because most of the time we were steaming at from eighteen to twenty knots. It seems strange to us because our sound gear was not effective over fifteen knots and we had no immediate objective, but the engineering plants of the DE RUYTER and JAVA were such that shifts to the cruising combination were very difficult.

We finally broke up again. Admiral Doorman went to the west, we went through Bali Strait into Soerabaja and fueled and left almost immediately to rendezvous with him near Batavia.

Before we got to Batavia, we got word that the rendezvous had been changed to Ooestheaven in the southern part of Sumatra. By that time the Japanese had captured Singapore and were beginning to land in Sumatra near Palembang. A new striking force was hurriedly thrown together. Commander Binford had a short conference on the DE RUYTER, we did not have time to fuel, Commander Benford did not have time to give us very much dope, we got a hastily written operation order and shoved off. The force consisted of the Dutch cruisers DE RUYTER and JAVA, the British cruisers EXETER and HOBART, six American destroyers, STEWART, EDWARDS, BULMER and BARKER, the PILLSBURY and one other (which I will have to verify from the records) and four

Dutch destroyers. The plan was to go up to Gaspar Strait, circle Banka Island, attack the Japanese landing force in the vicinity of Palembang and retire through Banka Strait.

We approached Gaspar Strait several hours before dawn, making about nineteen knots. I was in command of the second section of destroyers occupying position in column on the port hand of the main body. The first section, Commander Binford in the STEWART with the BARKER and BULMER occupied a similar position on the starboard hand.

Shortly before dawn the Dutch destroyer VAN GHENT ran aground on one of the islands in the narrow part of Gaspar Strait. The 58th Division had to back down to avoid following him upon the rocks. Another Dutch destroyer was left behind to take the men off the VAN GHENT and destroy her and the remaining ships proceeded north and then to the northwest around Banka Island.

The EDWARDS did not have any access to any reconnaissance reports to give us any information as to the strength or disposition of the enemy forces.

Shortly before noon, several fast planes dropped bombs from very high altitudes which did no damage. The Radar on the EXETER or the HOBART gave us ample notice of approach of Japanese bombers. They came over first about 12:00 o'clock. From 12:00 o'clock on we were under almost constant aerial attack. However, the anti-aircraft fire of the HOBART and EXETER was accurate and rapid and forced the Japanese either to drop their bombs out of position or to come in at a very great height.

One of the awkward aspects of the situation was that the BULMER'S condensers were shot and for a good part of the day she was running on one engine while they repaired leak after leak in the condensers.

The BARKER had trouble with the oil drain pump from her reduction gear sump tank and she was running on one engine a good part of the time. At one time a flight of bombers unloaded their bombs on the BARKER, straddled her, but did no damage except to give her 27 leaky condenser tubes.

In the afternoon, probably around 2:00 o'clock, Admiral Doorman retired and we headed back for Gaspar Strait again. It was quite obvious that we would be attacked when we entered that bottle-neck and our expectations were fulfilled. It was quite a rat race at the entrance to the Strait because the problem that faced us was that if we went through the Strait with the cruisers, we made a concentrated target for bombing attack and in the Strait we would not have room to dodge because of its narrowness. Most of the destroyers milled around outside waiting for the cruisers to get through.

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The Japanese bombing at that time was not particularly accurate, although they did straddle the HOBART. As the spray cleared and the HOBART came out of the water and smoke, her big searchlight started blinking and we intercepted the following despatch: "Thank you very much. No damage. Just shaken up a bit." I later had an opportunity in Australia to congratulate the Captain of the HOBART, over a drink, on his despatch.

We all got through the Strait safely, passing the VAN GHENT, which was on fire and blowing up, as we went through.

That night we changed course three times without signal, several near collisions were avoided. We had very little idea what we were going to do, but finally we came to anchor off Tanjong Priok, Batavia, just about dawn. It was quite foggy and we did not know just exactly where we were.

We got underway shortly thereafter and returned to Ooestheuvan, passing many ships bound from Ooestheuvan to Batavia. Ooestheuvan had been evacuated and was being destroyed. The town and warehouses were in flames and only a few ships were left there.

We went down to Ratai Bay in the afternoon and fueled from the last remaining tanker. People were naturally very discouraged. We fueled all night, it was a very slow job. The JAVA had to fuel first and then the American destroyers.

The BARKER and BULMER had been ordered to Tjilatjap for repairs, and that left four American destroyers - the STEWART, EDWARDS, PARROTT and PILLSBURY with the Dutch. The Dutch cruisers, except for the TROMP went to Tjilatjap. The TROMP, I believe, had been in Soerabaja all along at this time. The British cruisers disappeared for parts unknown, as did the Dutch destroyers. We went to Soerabaja, by way of Sunda Strait. Incidentally, I slept soundly most of the night as we were passing thru the Strait. My first decent sleep in a long time.

Just before coming to the mine field in Soerabaja before daylight, we encountered an American submarine on the surface. Since no recognition signals were exchanged and there was some doubt as to its character, I veered out of column and went to 25 knots to attack, thereupon he gave us the recognition signal.

The situation in Soerabaja was confused. We went alongside Holland Pier, which was a rather difficult maneuver owing to the obstructions which had been placed in the basin to prevent seaplane landings, and we got an operation order to attack the Japanese landing force in Bali, the Japanese having come down and captured the Dutch airfield on the southeast coast.

The EDWARDS was the last ship to get out of the basin and we had quite a time catching up with the other ships. Going out the east entrance was a difficult proposition because the water is so

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shallow, being only twelve to fourteen feet in many cases, and steering is extremely difficult.

We had to rendezvous at a point three miles south of Tafel Hoek at 01:30, 20 Feb. 1942, and were forced to maintain a speed of 28 knots to catch up with the TROMP, which was leading the column, and our other destroyers.

The plan was to have a three-wave attack, the first attack consisting of the DE RUYTER, JAVA, PETE HEIN and the American destroyers FORD and POPE, all under the command of Admiral Doorman, coming up from Tjilatjap and striking the Japanese further south at their landing point which was about opposite the island of Neesa Besar off the southeast coast of Bali.

Our force was the second wave of this attack. We were to go through Madoera Strait, down through Bali Strait, pass through the initial point off Tafel Hoek at 1:30, and then attack through Badoeng Strait, circle Bali, and return to Soerabaja.

Following us, there were supposed to be Dutch motor torpedo boats to make the third attack. We passed them in the Strait as we came down through Bali Strait.

About seven or eight miles after the narrow part of Bali Strait we were able to see the flashes of gun fire over the low south part of Bali. That was the Tjilatjap force striking. It was our first glimpse of the surface engagement.

We were all fine. I had explained the situation to the officers and had emphasized that they were to be guided by general principles and not to expect any specific orders from the Commanding Officer. The experience of the 59th Division at Balikpapan had shown that if one officer attempts to run the whole show in a night melee many opportunities to damage the enemy may be lost. I told the officers that unless something very unusual happened, gunfire was not to be opened until the torpedoes had been fired.

We were not sure of the composition of the Japanese forces. We expected to see a large number of transports and I think a group of three or four cruisers and seven or eight destroyers.

As we came down the Strait, the intensity of gun fire on the opposite side increased and several ships apparently caught fire. The first of these, we learned later, was the Dutch destroyer PETE HEIN, which had gone into the fight with her guns blazing before she fired her torpedoes and very promptly got blown out of the water. The engagement continued with considerable intensity for some time and then broke off, and shortly after that we heard over our voice radio CDD 59 giving his course and speed to every ship under his command. It indicated that the POPE and FORD were retiring to the south on course 150. The Dutch cruisers had gone on through.

Sometime after this another engagement broke out, which we could see and there were several fires resulting from that. Checking up on the situation later in Australia, the only conclusion that we could come to was that the Japanese cruisers and destroyers had tangled with each other. The second engagement lasted for ten or fifteen minutes.

On the way down the Strait we passed a few Dutch motor torpedo boats cruising around slowly waiting for us to go through. We interchanged position with the TRUMP and she took station about four or five miles astern of us. We passed through our initial point south of Tafel Hoek on schedule and headed up Badoeng Strait. From time to time we could see signal lights and searchlights of the Japanese forces, the searchlights sweeping the area between Noosu Besar and Bali.

We went up to the point where we thought the Japanese were landing and, although we could see several fires close to the beach, possibly burning ships, they were of small intensity and did not show us any other ships.

Finally we sighted two ships up on the port bow and the STEWART and PARROTT fired torpedoes. The EDWARDS was third in column; I held fire because I could not see the target clearly enough to make accurate shooting possible. Shortly after the two leading ships fired their torpedoes, gun battles started and from the flashes of searchlight beams we were able to distinguish several Japanese ships, apparently light cruisers or heavy destroyers. We fired torpedoes, incidentally having several misfires from our battery, which, I believe, were due to old primers.

The gun fire was intense. The Japanese ships had searchlights on both the STEWART and PARROTT and I was able to see several straddles on each of those ships. However, most of the Japanese salvos seemed to be 100 to 200 yards either over or short. The EDWARDS was under fire, but suffered no damage.

At this stage of the engagement the STEWART was hit in the steering engine room. A large shell passed through, cutting the wheel ropes to the after deck house and cutting the steam exhaust, not injuring the steam supply nor the wheel ropes to the bridge, therefore she was able to control her steering. The PARROTT got a jammed left rudder and sheered out to port, the PILLSBURY sheered out to starboard, leaving the EDWARDS and STEWART. I was badly dazed by the blast from #1 gun and blinded.

After a few minutes the firing died down as the ships were well on our quarter, so we continued on through the Strait. About that time the TRUMP came up astern of us and engaged a Japanese cruiser or heavy destroyer on parallel courses at a range of about 5,000 to 6,000 yards. It was most spectacular to see the tracers from each ship crossing about half way in the trajectory and in the earlier stages of this engagement both ships were shooting high. However, they both

brought the range down and the Jap started hitting the TROMP. At this time we sighted two ships ahead of us on the starboard hand and I was no longer able to observe the action astern, but men in my after deck house reported that the last salvo of the TROMP hit the Jap squarely and caused a sheet of flame to ripple the entire length of the ship, then she blacked out. The TROMP had been severely damaged, her fire control ruined, but her engineering plant unhurt. She took no further part in the subsequent engagements.

All through this engagement it was noticeable that the Japanese made very free use of a rather high intensity all around signal light which had a greenish hue, and we first sighted the ships ahead of us by sighting this light. As we steamed up toward them it developed that there were four ships, and shortly thereafter the STEWART and EDWARDS engaged. We were in similar situations, each of us having a destroyer about four to five thousand yards on our starboard beam and in back of each destroyer at a range of about six to eight thousand yards, possibly 9,000 yards from us, there was a cruiser. I fired torpedoes, as did the STEWART, and then the gun battle started, which was intense, the Japanese firing salvos from the destroyer of five or six guns, using a ripple fire, quite similar to the British fire. The cruiser was shooting apparently nine gun salvos at us, some officers said that they noticed twelve splashes.

Several minutes after the engagement started, I could see a shell from one of my after guns go out, looking good all the way. It landed amidships on the nearest Jap and started a bright fire on his deck. His intensity of fire slackened. Several minutes after that a torpedo hit him. There was a bright explosion, big pink flame and spray went up and subsided, and when it subsided, everything blacked out. There is no way of telling what happened to the ship, but he did not fire anymore.

All during this engagement and in the previous engagement we had made full use of our .50 calibre machine guns. Young Buzzetti, a Naval Reserve Officer of very brief training, but having had experience aboard ship since March of the previous year, had control of the machine gun fire and conducted himself very coolly throughout the action.

The cruiser fire was not particularly accurate and in a short time this second phase of our engagement ceased.

We continued steaming north to northeast and about five or ten minutes after the second engagement a Japanese destroyer illuminated me from a position about 3,500 yards about broad on my starboard quarter. At the same time, two cruisers opened fire, one 6,000 to 8,000 yards on the starboard beam, and one a similar distance on the port beam. My #1 gun was trained well aft trying to get the searchlight on the illuminating ship and we opened fire on him with machine guns and 4" battery. About the second salvo from #1 gun, I had gone

to the lee of the bridge and was blasted badly and knocked down and dazed. The Executive Officer was also blinded by this gun fire and for a period of several minutes 2nd Class Quartermaster Woodkey had the con and zigzagged the ship most efficiently.

We had increased to maximum speed and as soon as the Executive realized we were in a cross fire, he had started to zigzag chasing salvos. One salvo landed close aboard about abreast on starboard hand on #2 stack. We came hard right. The next salvo landed within about thirty seconds just short of the port anchor.

I previously stated that the PILLSBURY had fallen out of column in the first engagement. At this time the PILLSBURY came up on the disengaged quarter of the destroyer whose searchlight was holding me, drew to a close between 500 and 800 yards and opened fire at that close range with her 4" battery and machine guns and blasted the Jap sufficiently so that he no longer troubled us. His searchlight went out and the two cruisers, although they had kept a very heavy fire on us, straddling us several times in addition to the salvos that fell distinctly short of us, finally ceased firing. The ship was not damaged. However, when we got into Soerabaja the next day we found the side of the ship badly pock marked from small fragments.

We only had one casualty. Palma, mess attendant, was struck by a shell which fell off the galley deck house and his leg was broken.

During our first engagement, two men in #1 gun crew in the confusion lost their heads and were totally ineffective. Rodgers, 1st loader and Kull, 2nd loader, on #1 then took over the entire ammunition supply of that gun, Kull going back to the door going into the well deck to get the ammunition and bringing it up to the gun. In doing this, his ears were badly damaged by the blast of the gun, but he and Rodgers worked so efficiently that the gun was able to keep up and even exceed its normal rate of fire.

Our bridge was very badly broken up by the blast of the gun, extensive minor damage being done. Back on #4 gun, Penner, who was the pointer, had in the past practiced setting his own sights. The blast from the gun had blinded the gun captain, who ordinarily would spot and he was unable to see. Penner then continued to fire slowly. At each shot he would lean out from behind the gun shield and watch his shell, then reach up and make his sighting correction himself and continue firing. We feel sure that he got at least one hit using this method.

Needless to say, I recommended all four men - Woodkey, Penner, Fell and Rodgers - for promotion and for the Navy Cross.

After our last engagement, the action ceased and we were pretty well scattered, but we managed to reform, using voice radio, and dawn of the 20th found us circling Bali, heading for Soerabaja. The PARROTT had had a very narrow escape from running aground with her jammed left rudder, but had recovered steering control and steamed on. The THOMP was well astern of us making high speed.

During the early stages of morning twilight we saw what apparently were lights from Japanese ships close to the north coast of Bali.

We had no further information as to what had happened to our other ships nor to the Dutch cruisers. It later developed that the DE RUYTER had gone through the entire first engagement without firing a shot. She apparently had been designated to fire to starboard and the JAVA to fire on ships encountered on the port hand. The DE RUYTER, not having sighted any ships on the starboard hand, did not fire at all and the brunt of that battle had been carried by the JAVA, PETE HINN, FORD and POPP, a rather strange setup.

Before coming to Soerabaja, just after daylight, we sighted Meinderts Reef light ship, which is a pagoda-like structure. It was initially reported as a Japanese battleship and it was most embarrassing to get that report.

As we started up the eastern channel to Soerabaja, the Japs came over for a bombing raid. Previous to that time we had passed the Dutch destroyer BANKERT coming in. She was to have been in the battle, but had had engineering trouble and was unable to join up. The BANKERT started up the channel, but when she saw the Jap planes coming over she turned and lay off.

Commander Binford told us to act at discretion, so all the American ships entered the narrow channel and proceeded up. No bombs were dropped on us. It was a slow trip up the bay and as we entered the channel, periscopes of American submarines which were lying on the bottom of the harbor began to show and one or two popped their conning towers out. As I went by one rather battered submarine, I recognized it as the SEADRAGON and Lieutenant Ward, an old friend, stuck his head out the bridge and waved a greeting to us.

The STEWART was in rather bad shape, not steering any too well and requiring urgent repairs. She had had several killed and the Executive Officer had been injured. She went at once to the Navy Yard and the rest of us went into Holland Basin and started fueling.

Naturally, the tension and subsequent let down were great. We had had a week of almost continuous activity and followed it by three engagements in one night. Naturally, the officers and men were exhausted. During the day I tried to sleep, but could not relax.

That evening, Froggy Pound, skipper of the PILLSBURY, came by and stated he had had the same trouble, suggested we go up to the Sim Pang Club in Soerabaja for dinner. Just at that time, Page Smith, the skipper of the STEWART came aboard and told us that his ship had been turned over in drydock. She had been put on the keel blocks cockeyed and when the dock was pumped out she heeled over 35°. It was therefore necessary to destroy her because she could not be repaired except by a major overhaul in a fully operating yard.

We came then to a very difficult period. I was the only one of our destroyers that had more than one torpedo left - I had five. The JAVA had been badly damaged, the THOMP had to leave at once for new fire control and she shoved off for Australia. The EDWARDS was in good shape, had five torpedoes; the DE RUYTER was in perfect shape, the STEWART was wrecked, the PILLSBURY and PARROTT had one torpedo apiece. We had inflicted apparently rather severe damage on the enemy forces, the PETE HEIN had been lost. Subsequent attacks by submarines and planes further damaged the enemy, but the landing had been made good and, as far as I know, the Japanese thereafter had complete control of the island of Bali.

There were some remarkable incidents which happened. A Chief Petty Officer on the galley deck house of the PARROTT had been thrown overboard by the heel of the ship when her rudder jammed or at some other time, and was missing, naturally, when the ship got in to port. He was reported as missing, but four or five days later, after the PARROTT had left port, he turned up, rather tired, but perfectly well. He had floated around during the engagement, but finally managed to get himself ashore on the island of Bali, which was then occupied by the Japanese, he had hid in the jungle for several days and finally made contact with a few isolated Dutch soldiers. They had worked their way toward the western part of Bali and one night got a native to carry them across the strait to Java and from Banjoewangi, Java, had made their way to Soerabaja.

There was a remarkable story about the PETE HEIN; she sank very quickly and the Japanese ships opened fire on the survivors with machine guns. However, a good many managed to survive. When the PARROTT came up the strait several hours later in the first phase of the engagement, a shell cut the after falls to her whale boat which had been swung out. The crew immediately cut the forward falls and dropped the boat. It landed right side up and floated around. When dawn came, thirteen men from the PETE HEIN were floating around, spotted the boat and climbed aboard. One of the other destroyers had dropped its gasoline drums before going into action and, as luck would have it, one of these floated by. There was no gas in the boat, but they picked up the gas drum, fueled the boat, picked up about twenty more survivors from the PETE HEIN and made their way to Java safely. Fact is frequently stranger than the wildest reaches of fiction.

I shall never forget that first night ashore at the Sim Pang Club. Froggy Pound and I went up, met several old friends, Bud Ward of the SEADRAGON, Moon Chapell, who had just been transferred from an S boat after a very spectacular and successful career as commanding officer and was taking over one of the big boats. We sat around and congratulated ourselves on being alive, because we all felt that we could not go through an engagement of that sort against cruisers and destroyers at those close ranges and have any normal expectancy of coming out. The American destroyers had gotten away with murder twice, once at Balikpapan and one in Badoeng and Lambok Straits.

Admiral Doorman was at the Sim Pang Club and Pounds, and I went over and talked to him awhile, discussing various aspects of the engagement and comparing notes. We there met Mrs. Doorman.

We went into dinner and about 10:00 o'clock made our usual devious way back to the ship, having to wait for about an hour to an hour and a half to get a taxi back.

We had a conference the next day, checking up on details and started stripping the STEWART. It was difficult work because by that time the Japanese were beginning to raid Soerabaja heavily each day and we only had two boats to do the hauling. It is obvious to us that the STEWART was of no further value and must be destroyed. However, Comsowespac wished to verify that situation and sent an officer down to inspect it. It developed that the Dutch were interested only in saving the dry dock.

At that time, with the Japanese securely landed in Bali and consolidated in the Palambeeng area, it was quite obvious that the straits to the east and west of Java would soon be closely patrolled by the Japanese.

The fuel situation was difficult. The bombings had damaged the fuel installations. At every sound of the siren, all of the native workmen ran into the dugouts, shut the pumps down. The only time we could fuel was at night. Most of the Navy Yard workmen had gone into the hills and it was extremely difficult to get stores and supplies.

The conference of Tuesday, February 22nd, showed that the situation was very critical. We then got our orders to defend Java to the last. The one destroyer put a torpedo aboard the EDWARDS, giving us six, and then both the PARROTT and PILLSBURY shoved off to go to the south coast to get more torpedoes. Our organization was very uncertain. Communications with Bandoeng, the headquarters, were extremely difficult and Commander Binford had a very hard time contacting Admiral Glassford's staff.

A decision was not made to destroy the STEWARD, but we did place demolition charges and had a crew of four men under a young ensign and Chief Electricians Mate Brodie stand by to destroy her on short notice. We got off all the ammunition and spares and food that we could, storing up with depth charges and anti-aircraft shells, particularly. We gave a truck load of food to the crew of a British Army Bofors AA gun, who were stationed on Holland Pier. They needed it badly, for they and a few others were remnants of a Battalion badly cut up in a train wreck. This outfit had been evacuated from Singapore. They moved from Holland Pier just before we finally sailed. I don't know what happened to them after that.

There was a British anti-aircraft gun on the end of the Holland Pier whose crew had run out of food and apparently had no source of supply. We gave them a big truck load of food from the STEWARD to enable them to carry on. They seemed like a fine lot, but had come out of Singapore and were pretty badly beaten down. I was moored in the Holland Basin. The day's bombing which was heavy, resulted in considerable damage to the Rotterdam pier; some damage to the Holland Pier.

In the middle of the week I went outside of the bay, but was recalled as I went out the channel and then on return, moored at the end of the Holland Pier, my place inside the basin being taken by the Dutch destroyer BANKET. The next day during a bombing raid, a stick of bombs fell alongside the BANKET and broke her back. At the same time, within a few minutes, a similar stock of bombs fell near me, but they were all duds and landed in the water with a big plop, but no damage.

Our anti-aircraft could not reach up more than 10,000 feet. The Japanese were bombing from 12,000 to 15,000 feet and it was futile for us to shoot at them. The shore batteries were not effective. I know of no situation more nerve-racking than to be a target for bombing and not to be able to fight back. We would wait until we heard the bombs whistle and then lie flat on the deck. I dispersed my officers so that if we were hit, all the officers would not be killed by one bomb.

We finally got away from the Holland Pier and went out into the stream. The damage to the dock at Soerabaja was extensive and our fueling situation was getting worse.

Finally, the HOUSTON, PAUL JONES, FORD and ALDEN came from south of Java and joined us. The JAVA was made seaworthy and we went out and made a sweep to the end of Madoera Island and back into port again. On the 26th we were joined by the EXETER, PERTH and the British destroyers JUPITER, ELECTRA and ENCOUNTER.

There was no time for a real conference, however, the Senior Dutch Officers, Division Commander and Commanding Officers of the cruisers got together for a few minutes before we went out, and a rather rough plan of action was laid out which entailed sweeping toward Madoera, if we found the Japanese we were to circle around them, attack and return to Soerabaja or continue on to Batavia. When we last left Soerabaja for the battle of the Java Sea, the plan was then to retire to Batavia.

At this time, the PERRY had been sunk in Darwin by dive bombing, and the LANGLEY was sunk by the same group, apparently, which had moved to the westward. The LANGLEY was sunk south of Java by bringing fighter planes into Tjilatjap on the south coast of Java.

We went out, made a sweep to the eastward, came back about dawn past Soerabaja and continued on to the west and the northwest, had a light bombing attack, saw no enemy ships, and returned in the afternoon of the 27th to Soerabaja.

Admiral Doorman stated that it was his intention to remain behind the mine field until the situation developed. No sooner had we gotten into the minefield than Admiral Doorman in the DE RUYTER reversed course and headed out at high speed, signalling us to follow him, signalling that he was sailing to intercept an enemy unit. From then on we got various contact reports that indicated that the enemy force of transports which was in the vicinity of the Bawean Islands, heavily protected by cruisers and destroyers, was moving toward the southwest.

The Dutch destroyers KORTENAER and WITTE DE WIT were handicapped by engineering troubles and were only able to make about 24 knots. Admiral Doorman ordered us to remain astern of them. The British destroyers were in the van and the main body, consisting of the DE RUYTER, HOUSTON, EXETER, PERTH and JAVA, were in that order steaming toward the enemy.

Bombers came over and dropped a few bombs without effect and shortly thereafter we sighted the enemy and the British destroyers crossed over from the right flank to the left van and we tried to catch up. We were pretty badly strung out. We were on a generally north-western course, 315 I believe it was, and the engagement started. The Allied ships firing to starboard.

We were unable to get a clear view of the enemy from the bridge, but foretop reported that they were in three groups, one, to the left, a squadron of thirteen destroyers, then a force of seven cruisers, then a detached wing of two larger ships. We were unable to tell exactly what the two larger ships were, but during the engagement I noticed occasional splashes of shells which were considerably bigger than eight inch. It is possible that the two ships were either

old battleships or the pocket battleships that the Japanese are rumored to have constructed, but their identity remains in doubt.

The cruisers apparently were both six inch and eight inch cruisers. The action continued, occasionally we saw hits being scored on the Japanese forces by our own heavy ships. Then the Japanese attacked with a destroyer attack and torpedoes started coming. The JUPITER signalled the first one and shortly thereafter the KORTENARR, which was about 700 yards broad on my starboard bow, was struck on the starboard quarter by a torpedo. She broke in two, jackknifed, bow and stern coming together, and sank in a minute and fifty seconds by the clock. I saw three torpedoes surfacing beyond us. Many torpedoes were reported approaching. A submarine was blown up about 1,000 yards on my port beam, apparently being hit by a torpedo. There was considerable debris thrown into the air and a high column of water. We did not know the ship had been there until the explosion. We do not know whether it was a Japanese or Allied submarine.

I finally gave up trying to dodge the torpedoes. There were several interesting aspects to that, one was that many of the lookouts would report old torpedo wakes and not distinguish between an approaching torpedo and the wake of a torpedo that had already passed. Another thing was that the sight of the KORTENARR sinking close aboard distracted the lookouts badly. It was a fascinating sight, but it was necessary for me to speak very harshly to the men on the bridge to make them concentrate on their sectors because they couldn't do any good by watching the KORTENARR, whereas they'd do a lot of good spotting approaching torpedoes. I saw one submarine firing torpedoes. I saw one pass me very close aboard on the port hand and later sighted another submarine periscope on the port bow. I started to go over to attack, but had to change course again to avoid collision with one of our destroyers.

Both the HOUSTON and EXETER were hit. The EXETER was hit badly and slowed to about fifteen knots or less. The HOUSTON slowed momentarily and then picked up speed again, apparently not having suffered any serious damage. Of course the HOUSTON only had her two forward turrets in commission, #3 turret having been wiped out south of Kangean Islands on February 4th. Both the HOUSTON and EXETER were firing fast and I believe effectively. The JAVA was handicapped by boiler trouble and was continually lagging back. When the EXETER was hit she sheered out, the PERTH went over and put a smoke screen around her, as did the British destroyers. The ships turned in somewhat confused maneuvers. Our only source of communication with the flagship was by voice radio through the HOUSTON, thence relayed by voice radio to the DE RUYTER. Early in the action the HOUSTON'S voice radio went out and from then on our only means of communication was plain language by searchlight.

It took a long time to get signals over, particularly because of the gun fire and smoke screens, and the fact that we had no general signals at all, which were common to the three countries involved.

It was particularly unfortunate because in an action of that sort, things are moving much too fast to send plain language searchlight messages with any effect. As I stated in my official report, we resorted to the crystal ball to determine the ideas and future maneuvers of the force commander.

The fact that our maximum speed by that time had been reduced by wear and tear to about 28 knots and the fleet was maneuvering at from 22 to 26 knots, made it extremely difficult for us to regain any kind of position when the fleet maneuvered. I tried to keep station on the disengaged flank close enough to be ready for torpedo attack and not too close to be hit by the overs. I kept the splashes from the enemy overs about 500 yards on my starboard hand.

We had a series of relatively contradictory signals; counter-attack, cancel counter-attack, make smoke, cover my retirement. Our destroyers had come up and assembled from various places, some of us had our torpedoes set for fire curved ahead, some of us had them set for broadside fire with no gyro angle.

We finally went to attack. We went between the smoke screens and attacked the seven enemy cruisers. They opened fire with their broadside batteries. Owing to the fact that there were only four of us and the fact that we were on a position rather sharp on their bow, we fired at long range. It was not a good torpedo attack, but under the circumstances, I don't think we could have been expected to do much more while the enemy secondary batteries were close, but we suffered no damage. For, sometimes, we remained between the two battlelines and merely tried to catch up and take position again on the disengaged flank. We are not sure of the result of our torpedo attack - I saw no hits, but officers from other ships say that about seven to ten minutes after we fired they saw a Japanese ship hit. Immediately after we fired, I did see a Japanese cruiser badly hit from what appeared to be the HOUSTON'S fire.

We then tried to catch up with Admiral Doorman and his force, who were going to the northeast. My navigation position at 9:30 checked within two miles of my dead reckoning so that the plot I submitted in my official report of the track of my ship during the engagement was quite accurate. My gunnery officer subsequently made seven sketches of the situation as he saw it from the foretop - disposition of our own and enemy forces at various stages of the engagement. These sketches are a part of my official report.

We followed on up, gunfire ceased and then resumed shortly after sunset and there was a little night firing, the results of which I was not able to determine.

By that time we had no communication with the DE RUYTER, except by radio to Bandoeng, relayed from Bandoeng to us. We reported that all our torpedoes were expended and followed him.

From time to time there were short bursts of gunfire, though most of the early part of the evening the Japanese kept us under close observation by means of flares dropped from planes which we could not see. Several times torpedoes were reported crossing, I was not sure of them. They looked like torpedo wakes - it might have been something else.

Between 9:00 and 9:30 that night we were again near the entrance to Soerabaja, heading in a southwesterly course. For a while we thought Admiral Doorman was going into Soerabaja, we had no information, we did not know what had been accomplished nor what the strength and disposition of the enemy forces were. Admiral Doorman had previously told us that when we had expended our torpedoes we were to make the best of our way to the south coast of Java to get more, although, to the best of my knowledge, there were no more torpedoes that would fit our tubes anywhere in the Netherlands East Indies.

We turned and went into Soerabaja. We arrived in Soerabaja about 3:00 o'clock in the morning and moored at our previous position inside the Holland Basin, which, at that time, was the only place we could get fuel from. We didn't like being in the Holland Basin because we knew it would be attacked in the morning. We made every effort to expedite our fueling and at 8:00 o'clock, Commander Binford having gone uptown, I ordered the remaining ships to cast off and clear the harbor in preparation for the morning raid. It was not wise, as some of them did not have any excess amount of fuel aboard.

Commander Binford had gone at once uptown to try and contact Admiral Glassford. When we reached Soerabaja, we found that the EXETER and ENCOUNTER had returned to port. The EXETER had a boiler room full of water, her speed was limited to fifteen knots. The ENCOUNTER was not damaged, the ELECTRA and JUPITER had both been sunk. The former by Japanese gun fire while a smoke screen was between us and the ELECTRA. The JUPITER had apparently been torpedoed or struck a mine about 9:30. The Dutch had word that the JAVA and DE RUYTER had suffered heavy explosions in the neighborhood of 11:00 o'clock. We had no further word on them. They were presumed to be sunk. The HOUSTON and POPE had gone on to Batavia.

We anchored in the stream and just as the last ship was clearing the dock the first Japanese raid came over. This time they used much heavier bombs than they had used before. They seemed to be concentrating on the airfield. We did not suffer any damage, nor did anything come close to us.

We held a commanding officers conference; Commander Binford came back and called all the commanding officers aboard.

The POPE had been in port all along, having had to go to the Navy Yard for welding leaks in her hot well, but she had a full load of torpedoes aboard and was ready for sea. Commander Binford then went

uptown again to see about getting orders. We got word that the Japanese had a concentration of ships in Bali Strait and we knew that they had forces at Soenda Strait.

It was quite obvious that Java was folding up. There was no coordinated command at that time and the situation was obviously disintegrating. It was quite obvious that if we did not get out that night we would never get out. The only way to go was through Bali Strait, we had no torpedoes, except for the POPE. Bill Giles, my Exec., suggested that we send up to the ENCOUNTER and ask if she would accompany us on the run. The EXETER could not possibly get out the eastern entrance because of her draft and we figured that she was lost.

Commander Binford went uptown to get further orders and we waited. He came back about 4:30, the same time we got a radio to the effect that the POPE should join up with the ENCOUNTER to go out with the EXETER, which would have to make a run for it to the northern, and we were told to make the best of our way to Exmouth Gulf in Australia.

Late in the afternoon we shoved off. Commander Binford having shifted his flag several days before from the STEWART to the EDWARDS. We left word with the demolition party to take their orders from Commander Murphy, our Navy Liaison Officer in Soerabaja.

We did not have time to make any attempt to pick up the sick and wounded which were in the local Dutch hospital. Transportation was almost impossible from Soerabaja to the docks and our own boat transportation was limited. As we cleared the lightship, we got word that a Dutch merchantship had been sunk that day in Bali Strait by cruiser and destroyer gunfire.

It was a bright, clear night with a full moon. We ran down the coast of Java, close to the beach at 20 to 22 knots and headed through Bali Strait.

It was rather nerve wracking work entering that narrow one-mile wide strait, as we expected the Japanese would be in it. We didn't know whether they were guarding the north entrance or the south entrance. I would have thought that they would have been around the north entrance. It turned out they were down to the southward in the wider part of the Strait. Our previous passages through Bali Strait had given us confidence in our ability to navigate it at high speed and the visibility was good enough so that we could see the beach clearly. We went through the narrows at 22 knots and as soon as we cleared them we jumped up to 25, hugged the coast of Java and headed toward the southern entrance to the Strait.

Fortunately at that time, heavy clouds came up and almost completely obscured the moon for possibly half an hour. Then they cleared away, and about 8,000 yards on my port bow, about one point

on the bow, I saw a Japanese ship evidently patrolling. I don't know just when he sighted us, but shortly after I sighted him he seemed to be heading away from us at slow speed, changing course. The order of ships was, as I recollect, EDWARDS, ALDEN, FORD, PAUL JONES. In a few minutes the Jap was joined by two other destroyers. They swung into column and just about as we got abeam they opened fire. We had increased speed to 27 knots which was the maximum we could make and maintain any sort of position. I guess the Japanese were just as tired as we were because the shooting on both sides was poor. I would judge the range to have been 6,000 to 7,000 yards. Their shooting was particularly erratic and at no time did anything come closer than 300 yards to the EDWARDS. However, the rear ships had shells falling much closer than that. However, no ships were hit, nor did I observe any hits on the Japanese ships.

I came to the right, God only knows how close we came to the beach, Giles, who was plotting, called out to give a full left rudder. Commander Binford heard him and gave the order to the wheel, we came hard left, headed for the enemy and the plot showed that we were already on the reef, or so close to it there was no telling.

We expected at any time to see a Japanese cruiser. Commander Binford and I decided we would make a feint toward Tjilatjap before turning to the southern. As we rounded the point to head for Tjilatjap the lookout reported two ships ahead and we thought we had sighted our cruisers, however, they were not ships, they were merely waves breaking over the rocks dead ahead of us. We came a little to the left and passed on and gunfire ceased shortly after that, and the Japanese made no effort to pursue us.

We came around to the southard and continued at 27 knots for several hours then dropped to 25, to 22 and finally down to 20 shortly after daylight and continued heading south. Shortly thereafter we got word to proceed to Freemantle and then we started studying the various contact reports that were being made for the purpose of determining what enemy forces were in our vicinity. There was a carrier striking group, consisting of a carrier, two cruisers and four destroyers operating between Tjilatjap and Christmas Island and I believe the Pecos went down there.

That striking force was apparently the outfit that had sunk the LANGLEY, they sank the PECOS, then the WHIPPLE picked up the survivors from the PECOS, which had recovered the LANGLEY survivors, took 235 men aboard, which crowded her up badly, they were attacked by a submarine while working on the survivors, knew that the dive bombers would be over there again in the morning and finally had to make the tough decision of shoving off while they knew that there were men still in the water in their vicinity.

There is no question but what Captain Karpe and Commander Crouch, Division Commanders, made the right decision, because if they had stayed and searched for survivors longer they would either have been torpedoed or bombed out.

We don't know very much about what happened to the other ships. The EDSALL, I believe, was sunk by cruiser gunfire. The ASHEVILLE was sunk. The PILLSBURY, who had saved me at Badoeng Strait was sunk. The PARROTT had gotten through. A couple of minesweepers got out. The ISABEL got away, the BULMER and BARKER left with the BLACK HAWK and they got clear. A good many of the merchant ships were sunk by this striking force and one by one we straggled into Freemantle, where we began to size up the situation.

We had gotten the hell licked out of us.

About ten days later we realized that no more surface ships were coming down from Java. The HOUSTON and PERTH had been sunk off Soenda Strait, St. Nichols Point. The EXETER, POPE and ENCOUNTER had been lost north of Java. Very little information on that, except the despatch from the POPE requesting Bandoeng to get some fighter planes to chase the bombers away. In the war we had lost five out of thirteen destroyers.

We reorganized into two divisions. The Senior Division Commander and the four senior skippers were sent back. The skippers were relieved by their Executive Officers, who came on home to the United States. Giles relieved me on the EDWARDS, and the destroyers settled down to getting a little overhaul and doing convoy duty for which they were fitted rather than first line combat work which they'd been doing.

I spent 2½ weeks in Melbourne waiting for transportation after flying across from Freemantle and finally left Melbourne, I believe, the 6th of April and reached San Francisco on the WEST POINT on the 24th of April.